Morals for your story

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**Dilemma #1**

I recently got a test back, and I was very happy with my score. While going through the test, though, I noticed some mistakes that the grader had missed. I really do not want my grade to be diminished, but at the same time I do not want to be walking away with a score I didn’t earn. Should I bring the test to the teacher's attention, and throw myself on his mercy with the possibility of him lowering the test grade? I could, also, just keep my grade and be happy with it. What is the moral thing to do?

--Test Results Aren't Always Clearly Positive or Negative

**Responses to Dilemma #1**

Honestly, if there were many mistakes made on grading the test then it probably would be best to take it to the professor. By not doing anything you would be robbing yourself of a learning opportunity. Also, it will make the next test you honestly ace taste that much sweeter. Sartre would say it would be bad faith that your actions or inactions don't have an effect on society. An existentialist would tell you to focus on what applies the most meaning to your life today, feeling accomplished that you understand the material or having a good grade? Or both? (Just because you did well on an exam with a couple unnoticed mistakes doesn't mean you didn't work hard to understand the material.)

--Courtney

According to the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, you should tell your teacher about the mistake. First off, Kantian ideals are based on the thought that humans, being rational beings, are deserving of dignity and respect. Your teacher, who is a human (hopefully), is entitled to know if he or she made a mistake because of his or her status as a person, capable of rational thought. Also, you should do something not because it has the best consequences, but because it is the moral thing to do. You shouldn't worry about how your grades will be affected; rather, you should just let your teacher know the truth because it is the morally upstanding action. Another theme of Kant's is that if an action can be willed to be a universal maxim, it is a moral action, and vice-versa. Thus, if everybody were to withhold this type of information, it could lead to grades in general being not based on effort at all. So, you should tell your teacher—it will mean you've done the morally correct thing. If that's not enough, just think about it: your teacher will most likely let you keep the free points anyways.

--Clayton Manning

I would suggest talking to your professor. According to Aristotle's virtue ethics, for a decision to be moral, it must be made for the right reasons, at the right time, and in the right way. While it might be hard to approach your professor knowing that your grade could be lowered, you would have the satisfaction of knowing that you were making a decision for the right reasons. In this case, I would say that the right time to approach your professor is ASAP. Instead of feeling slightly guilty every time you think about that test grade, you will instead have continued forming the habit of behaving virtuously. It doesn't hurt that many professors at Mines are very understanding about these sorts of things, and may already be aware of the mistakes that you found.

--Virtue Ethics Enthusiast

If we look at this problem from a utilitarian standpoint, you should do whatever causes the most happiness. If you keep the high score, the professor won't be any less happy not knowing that you should have received a lower score, and the grader will likely be happier not having his or her mistakes caught. As long as you happiness from receiving a higher grade outweighs any guilt you may feel you should just keep you high score.

--Inaction Can Bring the Most Happiness

Your dilemma about your unearned test score can be easily answered by Kantian ethics. You see Kantian ethics says we all should do the right thing regardless of the consequences. In your case, you should tell your professor of your unearned points on your test because it is the right thing to do. This type of ethics also states since you are unsure of what to do in this situation, you should try to universalize the predicament. If each person who did not get an answer correct on the test, but received points for it and did not alert the professor, no grades would truly be earned. Therefore, the ethical approach to your situation is to tell the professor. Who knows? Maybe you will get extra points for your honesty!

--The Points Are Not the Point

The ethical thing to do would be to inform the teacher about the test score inconsistency. If you keep the score you received, it could be said that you acted dishonorably. It could even be said that you cheated the teacher by accepting a score that was not yours and you cheated your fellow students who took the test honestly. Think about it this way—if your teacher appreciates your honesty enough to give you the few extra points (and most teachers do, as I can attest), your conscience would be clear and you have a good grade. If the teacher doesn't, you will receive the grade you earned. One score usually isn't enough to bring down a grade significantly. Even if it does, you can probably work something out with the professor to improve your grade. It might require more work, but it will be worth it—because the phrase "on your honor" would mean something.

--Honoring Honor
Dilemma #2
I am a freshman here at Mines, and like most of you other freshman, I am looking for a place to live off campus next year. I had been approached by a couple of upperclassman friends (let's call them roommates group one, or RG1) that were looking for a roommate starting this summer. Everything had been set in stone for me to live with them, or so I thought. A couple of weeks ago, they told me that another one of my friends' living plans for next year might not work out and that if they didn't, he wanted to move in with them. I was taken aback. They told me to start looking for another place to live just in case the friend wanted to move in there.

So I did, and I found people to live with (RG2) and we started looking for a place. After we found a couple options, RG1 told me that it all worked out and that I could move in with them. Now here comes the problem. Originally I was obligated to RG1 and they were just as obligated to me. They broke that trust when they put my position back up for grabs. Then I became obligated to RG2. So now I am wondering what I should do. Which obligation should I honor? The original one with RG1? Or the new one with RG2 because RG1 nearly broke their obligation to me?

--Homeless Engineer

Responses to Dilemma #2
You should stick with RG2, because you now have an obligation to them. Because RG1 metaphorically threw you out on to the street, they broke any obligation that you had to them. If you leave RG2 now, you will be doing to them what RG1 did to you. If you consider how you felt when RG1 told you they would rather room with one of their other friends, this is exactly how RG2 will feel if you go back to RG1. As Kantian ethics say, you should universalize your maxim, and in this case, if everyone constantly broke their obligations to and contracts with other people, no one would trust anyone else ever again, and the world would be much worse off. For this reason, Kantian ethics say that breaking your obligation to RG2 would be morally unacceptable. You have no obligation to RG1, but you do have an obligation to RG2, and it would be morally wrong to break this promise.

--Stick With Your Real Friends

This isn't really a case of two obligations; it is a case of determining which verbal contract is still active. When RG1 approached you about the room offer and you accepted it, it became a verbal agreement by both parties. They then broke their side of the verbal agreement when they told you to look for somewhere else to live. At that point you were no longer obligated to room with them next year. You and RG2 went off to find a house and created a verbal agreement to live with each other next year after finding a house. Ethically you are still obligated to live with RG2, since that "contract" is still in effect. RG1 showed that you are not as valuable to them as you may have once thought, while RG2 has shown no discrepancy on the subject. At the same time if you decide to room with RG1 next year you will have displayed the same breach that RG1 did when they asked you to look for another place to live. All in all, room with RG2 next year.

--Nailo

From a utilitarian point of view, you need to weigh the consequences of each of your choices and decide which would produce the greatest amount of happiness for you in the long run. RG1 broke their obligation to you, so you obviously are not their first choice for a roommate. Would you be happy living with people who would rather live with someone else? Probably not. Also, if they turned their back on you one time, it is not unlikely that they would do it again while you are their roommate. Unless you really enjoy being around RG1, your happiness levels living with this group will probably be low. On the other hand, RG2 was there for you when you needed help. In the long run, they are probably more dependable than RG1, meaning you will have better relationships with them. This would lead to a better, happier living situation, so you should choose to room with RG2.

--Jessica Ho

In the situation regarding the roommate dilemma, the proper action would be to move in with the second group. Based on the presented situation, a trust was broken between an individual and a group of roommates leaving this individual stranded. As a response to this, the individual moved on in concern of his/her personal interest. Life is a fast paced organism that is constantly developing and altering. In order to keep up with it, decisions must be made rationally yet promptly which this individual did. If RG1 finalized a contract in which they broke, you are legally entitled to make a different contract with another group in this case, RG2. You should not feel obligated with anything relating to RG1 after they disregarded you. Why do you feel the need to show more respect to a group that obviously doesn't have that much respect for you? Therefore you should continue on with your plans with RG2 and confront RG1 about your decision with a polite and proper explanation.

--Connor Maxon

I would live with RG2. I wouldn't even consider returning to RG1. They threw you under the bus for someone else. First, that's a huge insult to you because they're playing favorites. Second, they obviously can't be trusted with the tiny act of showing you mutual respect - how are you going to be able to trust them for paying rent/cleaning up after themselves/honoring other agreements you make with them? If they can't be trusted with a little, how could you trust them with these things? Third, you said it yourself—RG1 broke their obligations to you, therefore you have no obligation to them.

--Get Out from Under the Bus

New Dilemma
My roommate snores. As you might guess, this leads to many sleepless nights for me. I know we have lived in the same room for several months now, but it has just gotten to be too much. I even have tried to go to bed earlier to accommodate for the hours of sleep I lose per night. I wish I could say something to her, but she has made comments about how well she has been sleeping, and I would hate to ruin that. Should I confront her and jeopardize our friendship or stick to the earplugs while I sleep?

--Sleepless Roommate